



DementiaUK
Helping families face dementia

Dementia and driving



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When someone who drives is diagnosed with dementia, they may be concerned about whether they can continue to drive. A dementia diagnosis does not automatically mean that the person must stop driving immediately, and many people with dementia can keep driving for some time.

However, driving is a complex task involving skills like judgement, navigation, spatial awareness and speed of reaction. These skills can be affected by dementia, depending on the type of dementia and the part of the brain that is involved.

Notifying the DVLA and vehicle insurer

There are some legalities that must be followed to ensure that the person with dementia is safe to drive and covered by insurance if they are in an accident.

It is a legal requirement to inform both the DVLA (or DVA in Northern Ireland) when they are diagnosed with dementia. To inform the DVLA, they should fill in form CG1 at [▶ gov.uk/dementia-and-driving](https://www.gov.uk/dementia-and-driving) and return it to the address on the form.

To inform the DVA in Northern Ireland, please visit [▶ nidirect.gov.uk/articles/how-tell-dva-about-medical-condition](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/how-tell-dva-about-medical-condition)

Before the DVLA/DVA decides whether the person can continue to drive, they might:

- contact the person's GP or specialist to ask for more information about their condition and how it affects them
- require them to have a medical examination
- require them to take a driving assessment



The person can usually continue to drive while they are waiting for their application to be considered.

Once the DVLA/DVA has all the information it needs, the person will receive a decision by letter. This may be:

- **Renewal of the person's licence:** if the DVLA/DVA decides the person can continue driving, they may issue a new driving licence. This is likely to be a shorter licence valid for one, two, three or five years, after which they will need to reapply for their licence and may need a new driving assessment
- **An order to surrender their licence:** if the decision is made that the person is unsafe to drive, they must stop driving immediately and return their licence to the DVLA/DVA

A third outcome is that the person is required to make adaptations to

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their car, however this is unlikely to apply to a person with dementia unless they also have a physical disability.

It is possible to appeal against a licence being revoked. To find out how to do this, visit [gov.uk/driving-medical-conditions/what-dvla-will-decide](https://www.gov.uk/driving-medical-conditions/what-dvla-will-decide). Bear in mind that the person must not drive while their appeal is being considered.

If the person with dementia is able to keep driving, it is a good idea to go out in the car with them at regular intervals to look out for any issues. New dents or scratches on their car may be a sign that they are having increasing difficulty with driving. It is also important for the person with dementia to have regular reviews with their GP (at least annually) to assess how their dementia is progressing.

The person with dementia must also inform their vehicle insurance company of their diagnosis.

If the person with dementia is employed and their job involves driving, they may be contractually obliged to tell their employer about their diagnosis. The employer's Human Resources Team will be able to give advice on this. If they drive a company vehicle, the insurance company must also be informed.

It is not just dementia that impacts on driving. If you are concerned about any other health conditions that a person has that may affect their driving, it is important to contact their GP for advice.

Driving assessments explained

If the person with dementia is required to take a driving assessment, they will be referred to a driving assessment centre in their area. The assessment will be carried out by an Occupational Therapist and an Advanced Driving Instructor. It usually lasts between one and two hours.



An on-road driving assessment is not a driving test, but an overall assessment of the impact of dementia on the person's driving. It may include:

- a written test, to assess the person's cognition
- testing the person's physical abilities, particularly reaction time and limb strength. This is tested using the car's steering wheel and foot pedals, which are linked to a computer
- a visual test, to check the person's eyesight
- a drive on public roads in a dual controlled car

The assessment is not intended to 'catch people out'. The assessors are usually supportive and will make allowances for poor driving habits that people have developed over time, as their priority is looking at overall safety, reaction time and limb strength.

Driving safely

If the person with dementia has been told that they can continue to drive, these tips could help keep them confident and safe:

- Try to drive in daylight and during quieter times on the roads
- Keep to familiar routes and short distances
- Reduce distractions, eg by turning off the radio and limiting conversations
- Have a passenger in the car to help with navigation
- Carry personal identification that includes information about their diagnosis in case they require support

Choosing to stop driving

Following a dementia diagnosis, some people decide themselves to stop driving. This not only reduces any risks to them and others, but may also help them to maintain their sense of control.

If at any point the person decides that they want to stop driving and give up their licence, they need to send their driving licence to the DVLA with a ‘Declaration of voluntary surrender’ form – you can find information at [gov.uk/giving-up-your-driving-licence](https://www.gov.uk/giving-up-your-driving-licence)

In Northern Ireland, you can find information at nidirect.gov.uk/articles/surrendering-your-driving-licence-and-when-reapply

Support for the person with dementia

For many people, driving is an important means of independence, and it can contribute to their sense of identity and self-esteem. Losing this independence can be very upsetting for the person with dementia. They may resent having to rely on other people for transport. They may also feel that having to stop driving is a sign of their dementia progressing and feel fearful about the future.



These tips may help guide your conversations with the person with dementia about whether they should stop driving.

- Take some time to explain what you are worried about and why. They may be aware that driving is becoming more difficult and be willing to stop
- It may also be helpful if the person hears this from other family members, friends, or their GP or another professional
- Provide the person with emotional support and acknowledge how they may be feeling. Allow them to openly talk about their feelings, even if you are unable to provide a solution
- Focus on the benefits of stopping driving, for example saving on the costs of owning and maintaining a car, such as tax, insurance and fuel. The money saved can then pay for public transport or taxis

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- Suggest some alternatives to driving and the benefits of these. For example, by walking rather than driving, they can get some fresh air and exercise, or by taking public transport, they will not need to search for parking spaces and pay for parking
- Try to stay calm so the person with dementia does not feel they are being controlled but is aware of your concerns for their safety. It is important that they feel respected throughout

To help the person with dementia come to terms with the loss of independence, it can help to encourage them to take more control over other aspects of their life, for example finding other means of transport or looking at activities they could do and places they could visit more locally.

It may also be helpful for the person to discuss their feelings with professionals or other people who have been through the same thing. Most mobility centres provide support for people who have stopped driving (see Sources of support on p15), and memory cafés, local dementia support groups and online groups and discussion boards may offer opportunities to talk about the experience with others.

Blue Badges

Blue Badges enable people with visible or invisible health conditions and/or disabilities to park in more accessible places, often free of charge. These include:

- on streets with parking meters or pay and display machines for as long as you need to
- in disabled parking bays on streets for as long as you need to, unless a sign says there is a time limit
- on single or double yellow lines for up to three hours unless there is a 'no loading' sign



Many private car parks such as supermarkets and hospitals also offer Blue Badge parking, but their rules may differ so always check the signage.

A dementia diagnosis does not automatically mean a person qualifies for a Blue Badge. However, they will be entitled to one if they receive certain benefits (such as Personal Independence Payment/PIP or Disability Living Allowance/DLA) or if they can prove eligibility on medical grounds.

For more information on Blue Badges in England, Wales and Scotland, please visit [▶ gov.uk/apply-blue-badge](https://www.gov.uk/apply-blue-badge)

In Northern Ireland, please visit [▶ nidirect.gov.uk/articles/blue-badge-eligibility-criteria](https://nidirect.gov.uk/articles/blue-badge-eligibility-criteria) and [▶ nidirect.gov.uk/articles/apply-or-renew-blue-badge](https://nidirect.gov.uk/articles/apply-or-renew-blue-badge)

Blue Badges cost up to £10 in England and Northern Ireland, £20 in Scotland, and are free in Wales.

Some London boroughs have their own disabled parking schemes with different coloured badges. Please see Sources of support on p10 for information.

Support for families

When a person with dementia stops driving, it can lead to changes for their whole family. It might mean that you, another family member or friend need to drive them around more or accompany them on public transport, which could impact on your work patterns and leisure time.

If the person with dementia is the main or only driver in a family and becomes unable to drive, the whole family may feel a loss of independence. For example, if they have dependent children, it may be harder for them to get to school and extracurricular activities, and to spend time with friends.

It may be emotionally difficult for you if the person feels you are criticising their driving ability, or if they blame you for taking away their car. It may also be an upsetting indication that the person's dementia is progressing.

The following tips may help with the practicalities of losing a licence:

- Look for activities such as support groups, leisure centres and walking groups in your local area to help reduce any social isolation caused by stopping driving
- Invite friends and family to visit the person at home to reduce the need to travel
- Ask other family members and friends if they could help with lifts



for the person with dementia, you, and any dependent children

- Find out about alternative means of transport for children, for example a school bus – you can contact your local authority for information on school transport for children with a disabled parent
- Set up an account with a local taxi service and book taxis in advance
- Keep bus and train timetables and contact details handy
- If the person with dementia uses public transport or goes out for walks alone, it is a good idea for them to carry identification in case they need support. They may also wish to wear a sunflower lanyard to signal to members of the public that they have a hidden disability – see Sources of support on p15 for details
- Find local voluntary agencies that may be able to assist with transport services, such as the Royal Voluntary Service – see Sources of support on p15 for information

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- If the person with dementia has hospital appointments, ask their healthcare professional if they can use hospital transport
- Order shopping online for home delivery

Although stopping driving can be challenging, you and the person you care for can still have a fulfilling life. It may even present new opportunities, for example, joining new groups or social activities that are nearer to home, or walking rather than getting a lift for short journeys to keep them mobile and fit.

What to do if the person continues to drive

In some cases, a person with dementia will continue to drive despite encouragement or instructions not to, or decide not to or forget to inform the DVLA/DVA and insurance company of their diagnosis. This puts them at risk of a fine and/or prosecution, of invalidating their insurance, and of harming themselves and others.

If they still have easy access to a car – for example, if their car is parked outside the house – they may forget that they have been told not to drive, or be tempted to drive even though they know they are not supposed to.

Sometimes, the person with dementia may be reluctant to discuss the need to stop driving with their family carer. It may help if another trusted person – such as another family member, friend or colleague – or a health or social care professional has a conversation with them about whether it is right for them to be driving.

You can also speak to the person's GP who may disclose relevant medical information to the DVLA. This can be done without the person's consent, but it is best to avoid this situation if possible by trying to come to a resolution with them.



Sources of support

If you are caring for someone with dementia or living with the condition yourself, you can register for our free online sessions, ‘Dementia: what next?’ at

👉 dementiauk.org/dementia-what-next

To speak to an Admiral Nurse on our free Helpline, call 0800 888 6678 (Monday-Friday 9am-9pm, Saturday and Sunday 9am-5pm, every day except 25th December)

or email 👉 helpline@dementiauk.org

If you prefer, you can book a phone or video call with an Admiral Nurse at a time to suit you: please visit

👉 dementiauk.org/book

Dementia UK resources

Changing relationships and roles

👉 dementiauk.org/changing-relationships-and-roles

Emotional impact of a dementia diagnosis

👉 dementiauk.org/emotional-impact-of-a-diagnosis

Employment and dementia

👉 dementiauk.org/employment

Mental capacity and decision-making

👉 dementiauk.org/capacity-decision-making

Young onset dementia section

👉 dementiauk.org/young-onset-dementia

Other resources

Driving and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)

➤ gov.uk/government/organisations/driver-and-vehicle-licensing-agency

Driver and Vehicle Agency Northern Ireland (DVA)

➤ nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/driver-vehicle-agency-dva-northern-ireland

Driving Mobility Centres

➤ drivingmobility.org.uk

Government advice on dementia and driving

➤ gov.uk/dementia-and-driving

Government advice on driving with medical conditions, Blue Badges and public transport for disabled people

➤ gov.uk/browse/driving/disability-health-condition

Hidden Disabilities Sunflower lanyard

➤ hiddendisabilitiesstore.com

Hubs Mobility Advice Service

➤ hubsmobilityadvice.com

Parking in Central London

➤ gov.uk/government/publications/the-blue-badge-scheme-rights-and-responsibilities-in-england#travelling-in-london

Royal Voluntary Service – getting out and about

➤ royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/our-services/getting-out-about

**To speak to a dementia specialist Admiral Nurse
about any aspect of dementia:**

Contact our Helpline:
0800 888 6678 or [👉 helpline@dementiauk.org](mailto:helpline@dementiauk.org)

Book a virtual appointment:
[👉 dementiauk.org/book](https://dementiauk.org/book)

**Our charity relies entirely on donations to fund our
life-changing work. If you would like to donate to help us
support more families:**

- Call **0300 365 5500**
- Visit [👉 dementiauk.org/donate](https://dementiauk.org/donate)
- Scan the QR code

Thank you.



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